



Legislation Text

File #: 160441., **Version:** 2

Refer the discussion on Homeless Services, including potentially issuing a new RFP and/or exploring other options for Homeless Services to the General Policy Committee (NB)

This is a request for the City Commission to refer a discussion on homeless services to the General Policy Committee.

On February 11, 2014, the City entered into a three-year contract with the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry (ACCHH) to provide homeless services at the Empowerment Center. That contract was originally scheduled to expire on September 30, 2016, however, the City Commission extended it for one (1) additional year. The extended contract expires on September 30, 2017. The expiration of that contract gives the City Commission several new options for providing homeless services. Those options include transferring the direct provision of services at Dignity Village from City Staff to a more appropriate service provider. For these reasons, City staff is requesting policy direction from the City Commission regarding the provision of homeless services, beginning in FY18.

Starting with the original contract, the costs for homeless services at GRACE Marketplace have been shared equally between the City and the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners. In the original contract, the budget for homeless services was \$308,000 for the first year. That budget has gradually increased every year.

The budget for the current contract between the City of Gainesville and the ACCHH (for FY17) is \$874,000 (\$437,000 from the City and \$437,000 from Alachua County). That budget, however, does not include the cost of bus passes (approximately \$15,000 combined, for FY16 and FY17), or the \$5,535 for the local match for the \$55,350 transportation disadvantaged grant. Additionally, since 2015, the City has provided management and oversight of the Dignity Village Camping Area which was an unintended result of opening the Empowerment Center. The cost of the management and oversight of Dignity Village, including the Dignity Village Manager and Law Enforcement, is estimated to be \$228,014, annually. That does not include the City Manager's office, Facilities, and Housing & Community Development staff time.

City Staff believes that the expiration of the contract with ACCHH provides a good opportunity to discuss homeless services, including combining camping services into one contract rather than having two entities managing homeless services at the Empowerment Center and Dignity Village location. It also provides a good opportunity to discuss other options for homeless services.

City Staff estimates that it will take approximately 4 months to complete the RFP process for a provider. Furthermore, staff plans to coordinate with County Management staff, since the County shares in the funding of homeless services at GRACE Marketplace. At the General Policy Committee meeting, staff will provide options to the City Commission regarding how services can be provided to the homeless.

In the past, the local Continuum of Care (CoC) and most of its membership supported and implemented Transitional Housing Programs. More recently, however, the CoC has begun to implement the Housing First

model, which emphasizes placing homeless residents directly into permanent housing and permanent supportive housing. This Housing First model requires organizations to try to reduce their barriers to entry to homeless shelters and to reduce the number of days in the shelter to approximately 30 days. The Housing First model also strongly emphasizes going to clients, that is to where they stay or congregate in order to provide case management and other services. Nationally, the Housing First model is generally considered the best practice model and is financially supported by the Federal government. In contrast, the Federal government no longer is supporting most transitional housing (there are some exceptions for domestic violence shelters) and therefore, the local CoC's that support this model are no longer receiving funding as a priority from HUD. Thus, in order to continue to receive Federal government support to provide services to the homeless, our community must continue to move toward the Housing First model.

Permanent supportive housing for people who need constant case management in their daily function, is also a high priority for the Federal government. The President Elect has not proposed any changes to this policy.

The estimated total cost of providing homeless services is \$1,177,899 (grants, general funds, and county funds) including management oversight of the homeless services contract and Dignity Village. This amount excludes in-kind supportive services to the management.

The City Commission refer the discussion on the contract and homeless services to the General Policy Committee.